

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
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FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4775
INFO AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL GENOA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 8371

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, IT
SUBJ: ROME IS CALM ON MAY 19 AS VIOLENCE HITS MILAN AND PADUA

REF: ROME 7966

SUMMARY. THOUSANDS OF POLICE WERE DEPLOYED IN ROME ON MAY 19 TO ENFORCE INTERIOR MINISTER COSSIGA'S BAN ON DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE CAPITAL ON WHAT HAD BEEN DECLARED A "DAY OF STRUGGLE" BY A NUMBER OF EXTREME LEFT STUDENT GROUPS. IN THE EVENT, ROME WAS QUIET. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES VOTED NOT TO DEFY THE BAN AND MEMBERS OF THE VIOLENCE-PRONE "AUTONOMIST COLLECTIVES", WHO HAD STATED THEIR INTENTION TO GO ON WITH THE DEMONSTRATION, DID NOT APPEAR. IN PADUA, HOWEVER, A GROUP OF SEVENTY "AUTONOMISTI" BROKE AWAY FROM A PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION AND WENT ON A NINETY-MINUTE SHOOTING AND BOMB-THROWING SPREE IN WHICH A GREAT DEAL OF PROPERTY WAS DESTROYED THOUGH THERE WERE NO SERIOUS INJURIES. IN MILAN, PUBLIC TRANSPORT WAS TIED UP FOR FIVE HOURS AFTER EXPLOSIVE CHARGES DESTROYED KEY TRACKS IN THE METRO-
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POLITAN RAILWAY SYSTEM. A LEFTWING GROUP CALLED THE "FRONT LINE COMBAT ORGANIZATION" CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ATTACK. ISOLATED INCIDENTS WERE ALSO REPORTED DURING PROTESTS IN BOLOGNA AND GENOA. THE FACT THAT THERE WERE NO INCIDENTS IN ROME ON MAY 19 REPRESENTS A VICTORY FOR THE GOVERNMENT, BUT THE INCIDENTS ELSEWHERE, THE VIOLENCE IN PADUA

IN PARTICULAR, AGAIN RAISE THE POSSIBILITY THAT
THE STUDENT DISORDERS ARE SOMEWHERE CENTRALLY ORGANIZED.
END SUMMARY.

1. THOUSANDS OF POLICE, CARABINIERI, GUARDIA DI
FINANZA, AND EVEN A COMPANY OF FOREST RANGERS WERE
DEPLOYED IN ROME ON MAY 19, WHICH HAD BEEN DESIGNATED
A "DAY OF STRUGGLE" BY A NUMBER OF LEFTWING
GROUPS INCLUDING AVANGUARDIA OPERAIA, LOTTA CONTINUA,
THE STUDENT MOVEMENT, AND THE "AUTONOMOUS COLLECTIVES"
WHICH HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR MUCH OF THE STUDENT
VIOLENCE IN RECENT MONTHS. HOWEVER, IN THE FACE OF
INTERIOR MINISTER COSSIGA'S DETERMINED REFUSAL TO LIFT
THE FORTY-DAY BAN ON DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE CAPITAL
STUDENT LEADERS VOTED ON MAY 17 TO CANCEL PLANS FOR A
MARCH THROUGH THE CITY AND OPTED FOR A RALLY INSIDE
THE ROME UNIVERSITY CAMPUS. THE "AUTONOMOUS COLLECTIVES",
WHO VOTED AGAINST CANCELLATION OF THE MARCH, THREATENED
TO INVADE THE CITY ON THEIR OWN, BUT IN THE EVENT DID
NOT APPEAR. ROME REMAINED QUIET THROUGHOUT THE DAY.

2. IN PADUA, HOWEVER, ABOUT SEVENTY OF THE "AUTONOMISTS"
BROKE AWAY FROM A STUDENT DEMONSTRATION AND WENT ON A
NINETY-MINUTE SHOOTING AND BOMB-THROWING RAMPAGE THROUGH
THE CENTER OF THE CITY. ALTHOUGH A GREAT DEAL OF PROPERTY
DAMAGE OCCURRED, NO SERIOUS INJURIES WERE REPORTED.
TWO BOMBS PLACED ON KEY LINES OF THE METROPOLITAN
RAILWAY SYSTEM PARALYZED PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN MILAN FOR
FIVE HOURS ON MAY 19. A FAR LEFT GROUP CALLED THE
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"FRONT LINE COMBAT ORGANIZATION" CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY
FOR THE EXPLOSIONS. MINOR INCIDENTS WERE REPORTED
DURING STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS IN BOLOGNA AND GENOA,
WHILE IN SEVESO, NEAR MILAN, THREE ARMED MEN ENTERED
AN OFFICE BUILDING AND SHOT THE GOVERNMENT HEALTH
INSPECTOR IN THE LEGS. SEVERAL KIDNAPPINGS HAVE
OCCURRED IN RECENT DAYS AND ON MAY 18 CARABINIERI
IN THE MARCHE REGION ENGAGED A GANG BELIEVED TO HAVE
BEEN PLANNING A KIDNAPPING IN A RUNNING GUN BATTLE
THAT LEFT FOUR OF THE CRIMINALS AND TWO CARABINIERI
DEAD AND SEVERAL OTHERS WOUNDED.

3. COMMENT: THE TRIUMPH OF REASON OVER VIOLENCE IN
ROME ON MAY 19 HAS GIVEN THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT A
MUCH-NEEDED BOOST IN THE EYES OF THE PUBLIC. IT
REPRESENTS ALSO A PERSONAL VICTORY FOR COSSIGA, IT
REPRESENTS ALSO A PERSONAL VICTORY FOR COSSIGA, WHO
HAS BEEN THE TARGET OF MUCH CRITICISM RECENTLY FOR NOT
REACTING STRONGLY ENOUGH TO EARLIER PROVOCATIONS.

PERHAPS THE MOST DISTURBING ASPECT OF YESTERDAY'S EVENTS
WAS THE OUTBREAK IN PADUA, WHERE NO TROUBLE WAS
EXPECTED AND POLICE STRENGTH HAD BEEN GREATLY DEPLETED
TO PROVIDE REINFORCEMENTS FOR THE FORCES OF ORDER IN THE
LARGER CITIES. WELL-TIMED ORCHESTRATED TERRORISM OF
THIS SORT IS LIKELY TO FUEL SPECULATION THAT THE
WIDESPREAD STUDENT DISORDERS ARE PLANNED AND DIRECTED
BY SOME SORT OF CENTRAL ORGANIZATION.GARDENER

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